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ABSTRACT

The change of emphasis from the written product to writing as a process manifests another important change--one from logical to phenomenological consciousness. Phenomenologically speaking, writing is both "immanent" in the writer and "transcendent" outside the writer. It is thinking of general concepts that actually occurred and writing about these things using every judgment, memory, expectation, inference, conviction, opinion, doubt, and emotion to write about these things. It is hearing and imagining sounds, seeing and imagining objects, sensing and imagining warmth and cold and writing about these things. The change from product to process came about because phenomenological consciousness enables us to "know" differently. As a result, the change continues to move us away from the traditional rhetoric paradigm all wrapped in "what's" to a process approach paradigm all packaged with "how's." (HOD)

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PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE WRITING PROCESS

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PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE WRITING PROCESS

Many of us involved in any way with writing have been moving, continue to move from an emphasis on the written product to an emphasis on writing as a process. This product-to-process change, I think, manifests another important change, one from logical to phenomenological consciousness. In turn, these changes have gradually advanced us closer to a writing paradigm, closer than we were a decade ago when, speaking from his discourse perspective, Kinneavy, applying Kuhn's term, stated we were in a preparadigm period (Kinneavy, 1971, p. 2).

Various thinkers, representing disparate disciplines, have recorded their views on what Teilhard calls "the evolution in consciousness." Although somewhat eclectic, this body of information documents the fact that consciousness can change.

Philosopher Ernest Cassirer (1946) suggests there may have been long periods in humankind's mental evolution when conception was different than it is today. Further, he maintains that much about consciousness remains epistemologically blurred. Teilhard agrees, "Refracted rearwards along the course of evolution, consciousness displays itself qualitatively as a spectrum of shifting shades whose lower terms are lost in the night" (1959, p. 60).

Several other philosophers (Buber, 1958; Frankfort, Wilson, & Jacobsen, 1964) explain consciousness in terms of the contrast between the "I-Thou" of primitive thought and the "I-It" of modern thought. Their distinction intimates a different "knowing" of reality.

Susanne K. Langer, Cassirer's disciple, expresses her views

another way, "Human life is shot through and through with ritual as it is also with animalian practices. . . . Ritual, like art, is essentially the active termination of a symbolic transformation of experience. It is born in the cortex, not in the 'old brain'; but is born of an elementary need of that organ, once the organ has grown to human estate" (1974, p.45).

Professor of Astronomy and Space Sciences and NASA award winner Carl Sagan, although approaching consciousness from an entirely different perspective than Langer, better defines her term "old brain." In his Pulitzer Prize book Dragons of Eden, he presents Paul MacLean's model of the triune brain: the reptilian or R-complex (Langer's "old brain"), the limbic system, and the neocortex. Sagan elaborates on MacLean's model by asking us to "consider the ritualistic and hierarchical aspects of our lives to be influenced by the R-complex and shared with our reptilian forebears; the altruistic, emotional and religious aspects of our lives to be localized to a significant extent in the limbic system and shared with our non primate mammalian forebears (and perhaps the birds): and reason to be a function of the neocortex, shared to some extent with the higher primates" (1977, p. 81). He quotes MacLean as saying, "We are obliged to look at ourselves and the world through the eyes of three quite different mentalities" (1977, p. 57).

E. Neumann is also explicit. In The Origins and History of Consciousness, he states, "The inclusion of a lengthy period of learning and training until full maturity is reached has its counterpart in the unfolding of consciousness throughout human history" (1954, p. 398).

Others are implicit. J. Z. Young, an influential British biologist, believes, according to Colin Blakemore, "We have inherited a blueprint for a brain that has stood the test of natural selection" (Blakemore, 1979, p. 40). Michael Polanyi, distinguished physical chemist and philosopher, indirectly expresses his conviction in consciousness change when he presents Personal Knowledge as his aim "to re-equip men with the faculties which centuries of critical thought have taught them to distrust" (1962, p. 381).

Taking exception to the fashionable idea that brain evolution produced only logical thought, biogrammarian and anthropologist Lionel Tiger hypothesizes that while acquiring more cortical tissue we may have acquired "an augmented capacity for illusion" (1979, p. 20). Another anthropologist, Edmund Carpenter touches on consciousness in an article "If Wittgenstein Had Been an Eskimo" published last month in Natural History. He describes how various cultures handle multiple perceptions and visual puns, most notably the classic duck/rabbit image. Like Polanyi, he suggests what at one time may have been natural to human awareness may have been educated out. For example: "Children learn to separate their senses when they learn, in class, to read silently. Their legs twist, they bite their tongues, but with enormous effort they learn to fragment their senses, to turn on one at a time and keep the others in neutral" (1980, p. 74). Yet in the Eskimo experience, Carpenter tells us, "when handed a photograph, Eskimos examine it as it is handed to them, no matter how it is oriented. They look at maps from any direction" (1980, p. 75). And the duck/rabbit? Carpenter admits Eskimos may not see both images simultaneously,

but he insists they see them differently than we do.

Perhaps most controversial is Julian Jaynes' theory of the bicameral mind, "that the selective pressures of evolution which could have brought about so mighty a result [a seemingly less essential brain part--the right hemisphere] are those of bicameral civilizations. The language of men was involved with only one hemisphere [left] in order to leave the other free for the language of the gods" (1976, pp. 103-04). And too, Jaynes observes that "consciousness is a much smaller part of our mental life than we are conscious of, because we cannot be conscious of what we are not conscious of" (1976, p. 23). Citing authorities in the field of brain research such as Bogen, Sperry, Ornstein, Hughlings Jackson, and others, he concludes by suggesting that the neurology of consciousness has changed and even now may not be set for all time.

Even this abbreviated overview indicates that Jaynes is not alone. Whether theorized as growth, depth, or expansion, clearly the capability of a changing consciousness lies at the core of all these aforementioned views. Therefore, if we accept the idea of a changing consciousness, it should not be difficult to see the present movement from product, the WHAT of writing, to process, its HOW, as a sign of that change.

Movement from a strict prescriptive form adherence to an access rooted in the way we come to terms with that which we write signifies, to me, a change from logical to phenomenological consciousness. In other words, phenomenology provides us with a methodological conceptual system, to use Heidegger's terminology

(1962, p. 50), not a formalistic mechanical system. Writing as a process allows us to return to Husserl's "the things themselves" by way of a time/space frame, a structure, and a means of encountering the world. Phenomenologically speaking, writing is both "immanent" in the writer and "transcendent" outside the writer. It is thinking of general concepts which actually occurred and writing about these things. It is every judgment, memory, expectation, inference, conviction, opinion, doubt, and emotion and writing about these things. It is hearing and imagining sounds; seeing and imagining objects; sensing and imagining warmth and cold and writing about these things. We hear ourselves hearing; we see ourselves seeing; we feel ourselves feeling; and we know ourselves writing. Artist Paul Klee says "color is the place where our brain and the world meet." Writers could rephrase Klee, "word is the place where our brain and the world meet." To restate: phenomenology holds that all that is known is held in or available to consciousness. Applied to writing as a process, it permits what Merleau-Ponty calls "a 'languagely' meaning of language which effects the mediation between my as yet unspeaking intention and words, and in such a way that my spoken [or in this case, written] words surprise me myself and teach me my thought" (1964, p. 88).

At this point you may be asking "Why?" Why product to process now? I think the change came about because phenomenological consciousness enables us to "know" differently. More precisely: I think the change came because now we may "know" differently. The evolutionary process, itself sometimes gradual, sometimes sudden and therefore difficult to fix in time, has brought us to a point

where our consciousness may embrace the world differently. We are able to see more, hear more, touch more, and we want it that way. So we look at the prescribed order--take, as an example for our purposes here, the order of the five-paragraph theme--and we are conscious, we have a strong sense, that something might be missing, perhaps something vital. Somehow it does not fit because we have become too conscious of the unexpected, the capricious, the erratic, the freakish, the unpredictable, the whimsical, the fickle. It is too pat, too slick. There is no room in its defined order for serendipity. It does not match what we see, read, write; it does not match what we now "know." We are too conscious that adopted forms and formulas do not, cannot, or will not work.

Janet Emig, in her pioneer work on writing as a process, that already classic document in our tradition, The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders, articulated this deepening awareness: real writers do not write like Warriner claims; the 5-star theme does not exist in the real world of writing; there are dimensions to writing; processes, uniquely individual and recursive, are a part of writing. Other process scholars (Britton, Graves, Murry) also present facts, facts for us to see. We look at those facts. Then we look at the HOW of writing and know the restrictiveness of the WHAT. So we have been moving, and we continue to move "to the things themselves" saying nothing is irrelevant now in studying writing as a process. We must write it, test it, attend to it. Then fit it--or, as Brentano would have it, use "the data of our consciousness to make up a world" (1960, p. 39).

David L. Lavery, in February's College English, discusses the ultimate embodiment of the 5-star theme, its elongation--the dissertation. Lavery claims Robert M. Pirsig's Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance was first conceived as a kind of creative, imaginative dissertation which was rejected as such because it violated the prevailing academic paradigm. Lavery's position is for change. I have two reasons for sharing this: (1) Lavery's stand itself, (2) the fact that this stand appears in College English now.

With a deepened awareness of process caused by a phenomenological consciousness, I believe (and I repeat), we have been moving, continue to move, away from what Richard Young, borrowing Daniel Fogarty's terminology, calls the "current traditional rhetoric paradigm" (Young, 1978, p. 30) all wrapped in WHATS to a "process-approach paradigm" all packaged with HOWS.

Thomas S. Kuhn, author of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, defines paradigm, that agreed upon system which includes the theory, application, and method of a discipline, by way of two characteristics. These characteristics serve to support my contention. His first deals with unprecedented achievement which attracts an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of scientific activity. His second deals with open-mindedness which fosters problem resolving. Emig's seminal study and follow-up studies by others coupled with the work of the London School Council's development program culminating in The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18) constitute, at least in part, Kuhn's "unprecedented achievement." As for "adherents," in 1970, College Composition and Communication contained one article that

dealt with writing as a process; by 1979 no less than ten articles in that same journal were concerned with that topic. The steady increase of approximately one article a year clearly indicates a growing interest in process. And, since most of the articles were probing or positive rather than rejecting or negative, I think it is safe to assume the process adherents are growing in numbers. Other journals show similar increases while textbooks and theory texts about process are obviously also on the rise.

Nothing could better demonstrate the "open-mindedness" of those of us interested in writing as a process than this very convention. Its theme--WRITING: THE PERSON AND THE PROCESS--and the thrust of the sessions most assuredly encourage tolerant and collective concern.

To those less convinced of our proximity to a process-approach paradign, consider this: "to be accepted as a paradigm, a theory must seem better than its competitors, but it need not, in fact never does, explain all the facts with which it can be confronted" (1970, pp.17-18). To paraphrase that quote from Kuhn, we do not need all the answers to have a new paradigm.

Two closing thoughts:

Britton and the members of the University of London Writing Research Unit say this about process:

> Teachers have many reasons for being interested in writing processes. Their involvement with all the learning processes of their pupils requires that they understand how something came to be written, not just what is written (1975, p. 21).

And I would like to stress that writing comes from first writing the thing, then looking at the thing hard--experiencing it, then asking, "How did I write?" "Why did I write the thing that way?"

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